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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: VICTIMS OF NO CONSEQUENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study reviewed existing literature regarding the effects on children who witness parental violence. The theoretical explanations advanced by researchers regarding witness-abused children's distressing behaviour have also been considered. In addition to the theoretical approach to the problem, staff of Sunderland refuge were interviewed.

Evidence which demonstrates that witness-abused children encounter multitudinous social disadvantage when fleeing violent homes with their primary carers was identified. There is a great need to pursue this area of research further. In addition, issues of race, gender, class, disability and religion require greater consideration. Most of the research has been undertaken by North American investigators. The challenge is open to white European, black and ethnic minorities to undertake research in this important area of social life.

One assumption is that the distress observed in children of battered women is directly correlated to witnessing parental violence. Another major assumption is that children who witness violence in early life will subsequently abuse their partners in adulthood. This study highlighted the need to approach existing research findings with caution, as evidence to support these ideas is inconclusive. Existing evidence only provides partial explanations for the problem.

The need for inter-agency cooperation to protect children was highlighted. Social workers must take on the lead role and coordinate services if children of battered women are to receive the protection they deserve as a birthright.

INTRODUCTION

Although children of 'battered women' have always been with us, their existence as a special group, with specific needs, has rarely been recognised. The emergence of the Women's movement in the early 1970's placed the issue of domestic violence firmly on the public agenda. However, children caught up in marital conflict were not identified as a specific group in need of services at the same time.

The primary aim of this project is to explore the existing literature regarding children caught up in domestic violence and to evaluate current research findings as to the impact this violence has on the quality of their lives. Evidence as to the scope and character of domestic violence and the explanations which have been advanced as reasons for its existence will be presented. Current research demonstrates that there is no solid explanation or solution to this problem. However, the increasing academic interest and the types of practical help that have evolved to assist women and children caught up in domestic violence are indebted to feminism. The feminist analysis of domestic violence highlights the numerous anomalies of prior explanations. Whilst acknowledging that feminism as a philosophy is divergent and requires deconstructing somewhat, the feminist



analysis will be utilised throughout as both a critique and a framework

The method used to undertake this project was a review of the existing literature that address issues of women and domestic violence and the effects on children who witness parental conflict. Various methods were used to locate the relevant source material. In addition to the literature review, information given by children's workers based at Sunderland refuge was also included.

Domestic violence is a multi-faceted phenomenon which generally cannot be elucidated by any one agency. Since its re-discovery in the early 1970s research has mainly focused on the plight of battered women. Moreover, most of the research has been dominated by the eurocentric perspective. Only recently have non-white women been able to draw attention to the triple oppression faced by them and their children when dealing with domestic violence, (Mama, 1989). It is generally believed that children are 'safe' in their own homes, yet a growing body of evidence suggests that children are more likely to be abused in their own homes than anywhere else, (Gayford, 1975, Hughes, 1982, Straus, et al., 1980). The sanctity and safety of the home is shrouded in mythical belief, (Phal, 1985). These pervasive beliefs entrenched in our society contribute and

compound the difficulties faced by women and children trying to escape violent homes, (Gelles & Straus, 1988, Thompson, 1993).

Louise Blythe, (Sunday Sun, January 16, 1994) reports that more than 10.000 women sought help from the North's refuge movement in 1993. In Hartlepool alone the police made 100 arrests following intervention into 360 domestic violence situations in the same year. If Hartlepool's experience can be applied to the wider social context, then, ostensibly, domestic violence is the highest committed crime throughout the British Isles. What is even more disturbing is the fact that the thousands of children caught up in this violence are being ignored. Many researchers, (Carlson, 1984, Jaffe, et al., 1990) have noted that a frightening number of children are regularly exposed to parental conflict.

Children of battered women are victims too. This fact seems to have escaped elementary common sense for far too long. It is naive to believe that the home setting is devoid of violence, most homes are abusive to some degree for most of the time. It is now well documented that people are more likely to be seriously injured or killed in their own homes by people who are familiar to them than any other setting, or by any other person; evidence shows that violence in the home is common, (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). The family is possibly society's

most damaging social institution in which to raise children. The need for professionals to capitulate dated ideas about domestic violence and respond in an appropriate manner to protect children of abused women is long over due. It is no longer acceptable to regard children of battered women as 'victims of no consequence'.

Chapter one will present a brief history which is necessary for demonstrating that domestic violence is neither a contemporary nor exceptional event for the individual, family or society. Explanations as to why domestic violence occurs will also be addressed in this section. Copious theories exist as to its cause which must be discussed and corrected before a framework can be established to work effectively with children. As a society we do not need to reinvent the wheel to solve our transport difficulties, nor should we need to establish new frameworks to further our understanding of how domestic violence impacts on children. History should not be allowed to repeat itself where children are involved, this would be a travesty.

The impact of domestic violence on children's psychological and behavioural development will be discussed in the second chapter. Evidence indicates that children raised in violent homes learn to respond to conflict in negative ways, particularly boys, (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981, Wolfe, Jaffe, Wilson & Zak, 1985; Wolfe, et al., 1986). Relationships formed in adulthood by

children from violent homes are at risk of becoming abusive ones, (Straus, et al., 1980). Several ideologies exist which try to provide us with an understanding of how being involved in domestic violence affects children's psychological and behavioural development. However, research in this area is still in its embryonic stage and findings should only be considered speculative and not absolute. To state that all children who witness or experience violence in the home setting will subsequently become perpetrators of violence in adulthood is too deterministic. The majority of the research carried out in this field is derived from North America. North America is a more violent society than Britain which means American children are exposed to a greater level of violence than British children. This situation must be borne in mind when analysing current research. Generalisations have to be made in many situations but overstating some phenomena may be damaging. Much more research needs to be carried out in this area before we can be totally assured that the observed, disruptive behaviour of children of abused women is directly correlated to witnessing parental violence. Considering that some of the methodologies used are of a dubious nature the assumptions made regarding children's behaviour should not be regarded as heavily qualified.

At this point I feel it is crucial to point out that the term 'domestic violence' does not refer to physical abuse alone.

Emotional and sexual abuse are as damaging to victims living in violent homes. If violence in the home is not accepted in the broad sense of the word children will never be safe. It is essential to note that the largest percentage of those at the receiving end of domestic violence are women and children, (Toufexis, 1987) therefore the following quote should be adopted as a working definition of domestic violence:

Domestic violence is assault or harassment from a man currently living, having lived in the past or spending a great deal of time in the woman's home. The assault or harassment could take the form of actual, threatened or attempted violence. It can also take the form of sexual, emotional, economic, mental, and physical abuse or any combination of these. It can happen outside the home but if it threatens the safety of the woman (*or child*) in her own home it falls within the definition of domestic violence. Domestic violence is linked to the social/economic/political/cultural structures, values and policies that oppress and silence women (*and children*) in society, support the discrimination against them and maintain the inequality of women (*and children*), (London Borough of Hackney, 1993). Italics are mine, I believe it necessary to include children in this working definition too.

The third section is concerned with the accumulative, social factors which exacerbate the ability of children to escape violent homes. Children are the most powerless group of individuals in society. They are totally dependent on their carers for their social, emotional, psychological and physical well-being. Numerous practical reasons prevent women leaving their abusive partners: lack of alternative accommodation, fear of poverty because of deficient financial support, isolation and the stigma attached to living as a lone/single parent family, (Hewlett, 1987). Lack of recognition regarding the victim status of children caught up in marital discord ensures their continued oppression. Considerably more assistance is required from agencies concerned with the social well-being of children if their distress is to be minimised.

The study concludes with a discussion of how social workers could reduce the distress for children of battered women. We need to look at ways which avoid victimising children twice. Historically, children of abused women have received an inferior service because their abuse takes place in 'private', (Phal, 1985). In light of current evidence victims of domestic violence should now expect, and receive a higher level of support from agencies charged to help. No one agency should hold responsibility for protecting this group of children, a multi-agency response is required. In my summing up I will consider

how agencies should respond and how appropriate responses can offer a more positive and constructive service to effect real change for children who witness and experience domestic violence.

CHAPTER ONE.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: What is it and why does it happen.

The primary aim of this chapter is to provide a foundation for recognising the concept 'domestic violence'. To achieve this it will be necessary to present a concise history of the phenomenon; an account of what violence includes, and to explore the theoretical reasons for its occurrence in order to demystify some of the trite unjust falsehoods concerning it.

Domestic violence is neither rare nor recent. It reaches back as far as antiquity. History teaches us that the use of violence to control women and children has been a common practice. Dobash and Dobash, (1979) trace its roots back to Roman times when husbands and fathers had the legitimate right to chastise, divorce and kill 'errant' female members of the family. The same authors claim that for centuries husbands have inflicted violence on their partners, both systematically and severely, to dominate, control and punish them as a condition of their authority. Dobash and Dobash, (1981) further explored community response to violence perpetrated against women. Methods such as public shaming and ridicule were employed to deter and alter the behaviour of offending males. A concerted effort to terminate violence against women was not attempted. Only an attempt to

regulate and "set boundaries" around the most severe forms of violence was considered acceptable. Lesser forms of family violence were overlooked because of the strong ideological and institutional support domestic violence has always received.

Martin, (1981) takes the view that violence in the family began with the emergence of monogamous pairing relationships, which she claims resulted in the subjugation of women. Fidelity was conferred on women to ensure the paternity of the child/ren, while men retained the privilege of polygamy and infidelity. Male violence at this particular time was sanctioned by the church. The church believed that the chastisement of women by their partners was the route to "cleansing their souls", (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

Prior to the nineteenth century a husband's right to abuse his partner and children as a means of domestic chastisement was both socially, and legally supported. The power imbalance which existed prevented women from reciprocating in the same way. The law perceived husbands and wives as a total unit, thus husband and wife were "one person in law" (Smith, 1990) which required the suspension of the women's legal existence. Moreover, the dichotomy of 'private' and 'public' (Phal, 1985) assault meant that husbands still had more freedom to inflict violence on their partners than a stranger committing a similar assault in public.

Throughout history the law has been ineffective in assisting women beaten by their partners. It is precisely the lack of support offered to women by the law which has exacerbated the physical and emotional abuse for children, (Pizzey, 1974). In the time of Blackstone, (1765) the man's right to physically chastise 'his' family went virtually unchallenged. The man's right to 'privacy' in his own home was supported and protected by legislation.

"The husband also might give his wife moderate correction. For as he is to answer for her misbehaviour the law thought it reasonable to entrust him with power of restraining her, by domestic chastisement in the same moderation that a man is allowed to correct his servant or children, (Blackstone, 1765).

The erosion of a man's legal right to physically chastise his partner came with the concern expressed by reformers during the latter part of the nineteenth century. However, despite growing pressure at this time legislation was piecemeal and the protection offered to women from violent partners was minimal. As researchers point out (Dallos & McLaughlin, 1993) the dichotomy of 'deserving and 'undeserving' and the developing concepts of domesticity, and privacy of the family resulted in a lack of state intervention even when protection from one's own kin was required.

An attempt was made by the British and American suffragist movement to keep the issue of domestic violence on the agenda in the years preceding the First World War, (Smith, 1990). However, despite their attempt, as a 'social' problem, the issue disappeared between the years 1920 and 1970. Researchers, (Freeman, 1979, Borkowski, 1983 and Wilson, 1983) associate this with the absence of a strong women's movement. In the 1970's the issue was placed firmly back on the agenda as a result of the early refuge movement initiated by Erin Pizzey in Chiswick, (see Pizzey, 1974). Since the 1970's the issue of domestic violence has gathered momentum and a huge network of refuges has grown. The speed at which the refuge movement grew aroused concern and provided clear evidence of a potentially sizable problem, (Smith, 1990).

As a result of the increased activity of the Women's Movement three important pieces of legislation were passed: the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976; the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and the Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates Court Act 1978. Following the passing of this legislation the Select Committee was brought into existence, (Smith, 1990). Since this time, and because of the considerable activity of the Women's Movement, a lot more pressure has been brought to bear on a multitude of agencies to assist women and children who are fleeing domestic violence, (See Domestic

Violence - Report of a National Inter-Agency Working Party, 1992).

Today's popular belief that violence towards women and children in the home is now less widespread is false. Although many improvements are in evidence, and perhaps women and children are currently safer in their homes than at any other time in history, a great deal more effort at societal level needs to be accomplished before children caught up in marital conflict will be safe. It must be recognised that central to the assured safety of women and children in the home is the necessity to perceive violence in the domestic setting as a criminal offence. Despite the passing of legislation domestic violence is still perceived as a lesser form of assault. Marital violence is perceived "as one of those things", something which takes place in private and should not concern the rest of us (Phal, 1985). Current evidence clearly demonstrates that people are more likely to be horrifyingly injured in the home than in any other setting, (Browne, 1989).

A common belief is that the family home is a tranquil and harmonious place and therefore it has been problematic to deal with the fact that many people are abused in their own homes. Women and children as objects of abuse is inextricably linked to the oppressive nature of the family, (Leonard & Williams, 1988

). It is only recently that violence in the home has been recognised as a serious family and social problem. From the figures which are currently available to us it is clear that the majority of perpetrators are male and that 70% of reported violence occurs in the home, (Dallos & McLaughlin, 1993). Evidence shows that wife abuse accounts for a quarter of all recorded violence and that a third of all murders in England and Wales are of women by their male partners, (Horley, 1988).

Despite all the available evidence the true extent of domestic violence is alien, existing figures distort rather than represent the actual level of family violence. Data on the issue derives from a diverse set of sources which are not always reported to the law. Several researchers point out that domestic violence is possibly the most under-reported crime and that the figures available only represent the 'tip of the iceberg', (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, Edwards, 1986, Phal, 1985, Walker, 1979).

Possibly the greatest barrier to terminating violence in the home is the idea that the family is a non violent institution. Until it is fully recognised by society that the family is potentially the most dangerous institution in which to live, children remain in danger.

Defining Violence.

In any discussion regarding domestic violence problems in defining what constitutes a violent act invariably arise. Much depends on the cultural views as to what behaviour is considered acceptable. Lorna Smith, (1990) claims that the multiplicity of terms used to describe violence in the home rarely serve to clarify the issue. The lack of a clear definition often confuses the nature of the violent act. Morris, (1987) notes that the current definition masks who the real victims of this iniquitous crime are.

Browne, (1989) asks: to what extreme has the transgression to reach in the domestic context before society considers it violent?. The diverse notions circling the meaning of the word violence allow acts of aggression to pass beyond the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour when it occurs in the home. When defining violent acts, Browne, (1989) suggests, our analysis of the issue should include acts of verbal aggression because they are often worse than a physical attack. The long term emotional consequences of verbal abuse may not manifest themselves until years after the initial attack, thus resulting in profound psychological damage for the victim, (Jaffe, et al., 1990). Words carry strong meanings which often fester for many

years before the victim demonstrates their accumulative psychological effect, (Browne, 1989).

Gelles, (1980) adopted a dual model to define violence: "normal violence" and "abusive violence". Normal violence comprises acts such as pushing, slapping and shoving which in many households are accepted, approved and compulsory in family living patterns. This type of violence is perceived as normal because the perpetrator views it as a way of achieving some goal and the victim passively accepts the abuse because they see it as a punishment for their wrongdoing.

Conversely, abusive violence is employed in different circumstances usually where the victim appears resistant to conform to the demands and expectations of the perpetrator. This type of violence is associated with dangerous behaviour where the risk of severe injury to the victim is high. In many of these attacks weapons, such as guns and knives, are used against the victim which often result in fatalities.

It is clear that there is a need to decipher the term violence, particularly where it is prefixed by the term domestic, before an acceptable definition of violence will be achieved, (Women's National Commission, 1989). Too many 'minor attacks' go ignored. Society needs to recognise that it is the acceptance of

these minor attacks which have led to the ever increasing problems of family violence, (Jaffe, et al., 1990). The need to incorporate acts of verbal aggression into our analysis of the issue is clear. In many ways they can be more terrifying than physical attacks. Physical injuries heal given time, damage to the self image may never heal after verbal onslaught continuous throughout one's childhood, (Jaffe, 1990). A working definition which includes an understanding of the damage created by verbal abuse will assist all those children who show no overt sign of violence, such as a black eye, but who are inwardly damaged by profanities so vile they feel totally degraded. This form of violence should be abhorred and detested by society because verbal abuse is as pernicious in the damage it causes.

There is no doubt that the term violence is a complex one. Definition of the concept is by no means simple, as Gelles and Straus, (1988) point out:

Twenty years of discussion, debate, and action have led us to conclude that there will never be an acceptable definition of abuse, because abuse is not a scientific or clinical term. Rather, it is a political concept. Abuse is any act that is considered deviant or harmful by a group large enough or with sufficient power to enforce the definition.

In the case of domestic violence if abuse is not accepted in the broadest sense of the word children will never be safe. We have to stop coating this crime in a 'passive veneer' to dispel the myth that violence directed towards children in the domestic setting is different to that which occurs elsewhere. We must demonstrate our condemnation of this crime by renouncing it.

Domestic Violence: Causal Links.

There is no firm agreement as to the cause of domestic violence. However, several theories have emerged which try to offer an explanation for its existence. One explanation emphasises the pathological and deviant features of the abusing individual, (Faulk, 1974, Gayford, 1975). Another prominent reason given is the imbalance of power which exists between men and women, (Dobash and Dobash, 1979, 1992, Phal, 1985, Mama, 1989). Others who are dissatisfied with the above reasons tend to perceive male violence as being associated with social factors, (Steinmetz and Straus, 1974).

Advocates of individual psychology explain violence in terms of mental illness. Faulk and Gayford concur that men who abuse have some sort of pathological disorder. Pathologising the problem reduces the need to look for other explanations of this crime. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that it has gained in

popularity as an explanation for so long. Blaming the individual removes the focus from the contribution of wider society to this problem, and serves to minimise what is the expected by way of assistance for the victims. Moreover, it offers the offender the excuse to go on abusing others without facing requital for their violence.

Another equally distorted and simple explanation offered for this crime is the strong link between the excessive use of alcohol and violence. Research does indicate that a link between the excessive consumption of alcohol and violence in the home exists, (Gelles, 1974, Phal, 1985,). Research findings (Gelles, 1974,) indicate that many violent attacks which occur in the home do so after the pub shuts, therefore it is the alcohol to blame for the attack. It is the over consumption of alcohol which alters the man from a comparatively sociable chap into an abusing monster.

This analysis of the cause is not acceptable, it provides the offender with an excuse for their abusing behaviour. Blaming the excessive use of alcohol allows the abuser to avoid responsibility for their actions. Too many individuals accept this excuse for abusive behaviour (Roy, 1977) but it is no longer a plausible reason, nobody forces a man to drink alcohol. A man who consciously chooses to consume alcohol to excessive

limits which results in violence on his return home, does not deserve an excuse for his behaviour.

Another popular myth which exists is the one that suggests women elicit the violent attacks perpetrated against them, (Gayford, 1975, 1976 Pizzey, 1981). Somehow women provoke the violence directed towards them and endure the abuse because they are different to nonvictimized women, (Gayford, 1976). Women who deviate from the considered social norm and who 'fail' to adhere to the female stereotype cause their own victimization.

As an explanation this theory is as popular as the alcohol related one. Yet it lacks understanding of the true nature of violence and depicts women as perverse masochists. Furthermore, by suggesting that the victim is to blame for their own abuse all other reasons are obscured. Proffering an individualistic explanation for what appears to be a universalistic problem perhaps only clarifies the cause in a few cases, (Freeman, 1979).

In addition to the explanations already mentioned numerous other suggestions have been offered as causal links: isolation from family support systems; depression; learned helplessness; stress; errant children; financial difficulties; unemployment and being raised in a violent family. Numerous competing theories make it

difficult to reach a definitive conclusion as to the cause of this problem. As Wilson, (1983) notes:

"The search for causation.... becomes, in a sense, a wild goose chase...", that it is pointless to try and find one causative factor, it would serve a greater purpose to look for a multi-dimensional explanation.

Wilson's suggestion that domestic violence is a consequence of multiple factors seems to be a valid one. However, like so many theorists Wilson fails to understand the sexist nature of the existing evidence and therefore fails to take account of the power imbalance which exists in the majority of heterosexual relationships. Too many theorists are guilty of taking an uncritical stance towards the functioning of the family and in particular the subordinate role of women within it. The family is a socially constructed institution underpinned by numerous patriarchal assumptions which provide the fertilizer for the sexism that oppresses women ensuring that they remain in the domestic and nurturing roles, (Thompson, 1993). The feminist analysis of family life and the inferior position conferred on women when entering this institution elucidates the sexist nature of much of the existing literature on the subject of domestic violence.

Feminists claim violence in the home is underpinned by the unequal distribution of power which exist in relationships between male and female and adult and child throughout society, regardless of class, culture, religion or colour. It is the authority and power conferred on men which nurtures and promotes the potential serious risk to women and children in their own homes. Violence directed towards women and children in the home is the most vicious and explicit demonstration of patriarchal control. Violence in the home is used to coerce and maintain control over what men view as their socially structured right to chastise, (Schechter, 1982).

This chapter provides a historical overview of the problem illustrating the fact that domestic violence is neither new or rare. It further tackles the issue of what violence involves, indicating that a clear definition is required in order to clarify the problem. Until the word violence is broadly defined children involved in marital conflict remain unsafe. The demarcation line between what is private matter and what is a public one needs urgent clarification. Theories as to why violence in the home occurs draws this section to a close. The myths regarding domestic violence are entrenched in British society. They are pernicious in the damage they cause to our children. Myth 'robs' children of the protection they rightly deserve. Blaming pathological characteristics as precipitous of

a violent attack is to sidestep the issue. Perhaps it should be ascertained who benefits most from this type of analysis. The feminist analysis of the issue provides the most lucid explanation for domestic violence. The sex role socialisation process confers power onto men and if their wives, partners and children fall short of their expectations, subjugation is achieved by the use of violence.

CHAPTER TWO

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: THE EFFECTS OF WITNESSING PARENTAL VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT.

Evidence that children involved in marital violence are affected in an adverse way has increased over the last fifteen years, (Fantuzzo & Lindquist, 1989). However, the infantile nature of this research indicates that current findings should be approached with caution. To date investigators have not produced convincing evidence which demonstrates that the harm caused to children involved in marital conflict is unique to observing parental violence. Heightened adjustment problems in children from violent homes is perhaps the consequence of many connected factors, comprising: observing open parental conflict, experiencing direct emotional and physical abuse, the reduction in parental care following a violent episode, and the fear that they or their mothers will be severely injured or killed during a violent outburst, (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981 Burman & Allen-Mears, 1994). Where children are forced to leave their homes and enter women's refuge following a violent episode factors such as grief over the absent parent, loss of friends and extended family and a disruption to their daily routine may also contribute to the distressing behaviour observed in children of abused women, (Jaffe, Wolf, Wilson, 1990, Moore, 1989). For a

black child entering a refuge the effects of racism may be the worst stress factor to cope with, (Mama, 1989).

Lindquist, (1989) notes that while some studies have recognised that observing parental violence is detrimental to children they have not provided the answers to 1. the exclusive effect of witnessing parental violence, 2. the characteristics and intensity of the effects on children, and 3. the variables which mediate or exacerbate these effects. Evidence, (Rutter, 1979) indicates that distressing behaviour in children is likely to be correlated to multiple stress factors rather than a single definitive one. Rutter, (1979) noted that where children experience a single risk factor alterations to their behaviour are not pronounced.

Although existing research fails to provide a single risk factor which significantly correlates with the distressing behaviour observed in witness-abused children, the evidence emerging from various sources indicate that witnessing marital conflict does adversely influence children's behavioural and psychological development. The first part of this section will present the main findings regarding the effects on witness-abused children. This will be followed by an evaluation of the studies reviewed, attaching importance to the methodological disparities of existing research, and where gaps have been identified

recommendations regarding the direction for future research will be offered. An account of both the supporting and opposing beliefs of the two main theoretical frameworks underpinning most of the available research will then be presented.

Psychological and Behavioural Effects on Children.

Following the 'resurrection' of the feminist movement numerous writers have made a significant contribution to the increased awareness regarding the plight of battered women. As a result of their findings many more services are now available to women fleeing violent partners. However, despite the enormous attention paid to women victims only a nominal interest has been paid to the effects on children living with violent parents, unless they too became victims of physical abuse, (Jaffe, et al., 1990). It is only recently that the link between parental violence and its possible adverse affects on children has become more visible within the literature. Although children who witness marital conflict are referred to as the 'unintended victims', (Rosenbaum & O' Leary, 1981) evidence is beginning to emerge which contradicts this idea. In some cases the child may be the 'prey' of some men, (Forman, 1991). The increased attention now being given to this area of child development is deserved and long overdue. Although existing evidence has not identified a unique behavioural or psychological response which

characterises witness-abused children, it has highlighted that they are victims nonetheless.

The first accounts of the association between children's disturbed behaviour and domestic violence emerged from the refuge system. These initial reports provided the foundation for the subsequent investigations undertaken with this group of children, (Jaffe, et al., 1990). Some of the consistent internalized and externalized behavioural difficulties discerned among witness-abused children are: enuresis, nightmares, depression, aggression, temper tantrums and numerous psychosomatic complaints such as headaches, stomach upset and asthma, (Moore, 1989, Levine, 1975, Hughes, 1982, 1989). Another important aspect of this research is the gender differences identified in the children's responses to violence. Some studies report that boys are more likely to express their distress in an aggressive way, while girls adopt passive methods of coping, (Hughes, 1982, 1989, Christopoulo et al., 1987, Porter & O' Leary, 1980, Jaffe et al., 1986). Conversely, other investigations (Sternberg et al., 1993, Jouriles et al., 1987,). report finding no gender differences among their population samples. One partial explanation for gender discrepancies is that boys and girls are socialized differently. From birth boys are encouraged to be more aggressive and independent, while their female counterparts are encouraged to be non-aggressive and meek. Males who behave

in a way that is considered womanly, such as crying, are frowned upon. Conversely, girls who drift from the socially accepted norms are perceived as 'tom boys' and sexual deviants, (Dallos & Mc, Laughlin 1993). Another explanation offered for the gender differences is that boys receive more negative forms of discipline from their mothers because they resemble the assailant. Males are more likely to be victims of their mothers' displaced anger which results in their heightened aggressive behaviour. In addition, mothers evaluation of their sons' behaviour may contain an element of bias for the same reason, boys resemble their fathers, (Porter & O' Leary, 1980, Jaffe, et al., 1986, Jouriles, et al., 1991). The marked discrepancies regarding gender differences among existing research indicates that a closer examination of child and parental variables is required, particularly socialization styles, (Fantuzzo & Lindquist, 1989).

Research into the association between parental violence and child behaviour indicates that exposure to parental conflict may be detrimental to their psychological, emotional and behavioural well-being. In this respect these investigations are important as they provide the impetus for future research. However, despite the increased interest in this area of family dynamics existing research cannot conclusively demonstrate that the distressing behaviour observed in witness-abused children is

unique to witnessing parental violence. There are so many ways that a child can be harmed by living with violent parents. Women are the primary carers of children and are also the main targets of marital violence, (Walker, 1979). One possible explanation for the distress observed in children is having to watch the damage inflicted on the person who nurtures them. Another possible distress encountered by these children is the fear of personal physical injury if they try to intervene on behalf of the abused carer, (Carlson, 1984). Children also risk becoming the 'innocent victims' of displaced anger and are highly likely to encounter emotional neglect because their primary carer may be in a constant state of anxiety, (Carlson, 1984, Rutter, 1979). Children frequently blame themselves for the difficulties which exist between their parents. The emotional distress experienced by children who believe that their mothers are remaining with a violent partner because of them is substantial, (Elbow, 1982).

Research indicates that even where acute disharmony, (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) exists in the home children are prepared to tolerate this unstable situation to keep their parents together. Several of the children advised that the changes to their lives following their parents divorce was more stressful to cope with than the previous marital violence. In addition, children of mothers traumatised by the violence and

the subsequent separation from their partners face double distress. Women leaving violent relationships are often so traumatised that their emotional and psychological functioning is severely diminished, (Walker, 1979). This situation may result in children receiving inappropriate care and much needed protection. Evidence demonstrates that the child's emotional distress can be mitigated by the remaining parent, (Rutter, 1971). The child can be assisted to adjust to the new situation if the remaining parent recognises the child's trauma also, (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980,). Research into the aftermath of separation and divorce following a violent relationship is important. It highlights that a diversity of risk factors may be responsible for the distress displayed by the child following marital strife. However, future research into how children's lives are affected following parental separation and divorce should consider what contact arrangements are in operation for the children and the absent parent. Hester and Radford's, (1992) findings demonstrate that the continued emotional abuse of children is occasioned by violent ex-partners during contact hours in an effort to regain control over their ex-wives. Some of the behaviours noted by Hester and Radford are: physical and verbal abuse of the mother as the child returns from contact, the threat that the child will be abducted or held as a hostage if the women does not reconcile with her ex-partner and reporting mothers to the legal services in an attempt to intimidate and

harass them, (Hester & Radford, 1992). Identifying the main risk factor which adversely affects children following parental separation and divorce is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, it can be confidentially assumed that the continued emotional abuse of children by their fathers during contact is perhaps more detrimental to children's well-being than the marital breakdown itself, (Rutter, 1971).

After reviewing the literature Rutter, (1971) concluded that it is not the parental separation which causes distress in children, it is the continuous disharmony in marital relationships which cause the child damage. Children from homes where death rather than discord caused the break-up of the family unit did not engage in anti-social behaviour to any significant degree. Anti-social behaviour was found to be more prevalent among children from homes where parental discord existed. Where an increase in anti-social behaviour was noted following parental death it was not statistically significant to warrant concern. As a single factor death of a parent did not signify that the child would experience long term psychological distress. The distressing behaviour observed in children following the death of a parent is possibly due to an accumulation of factors such as: the long illness prior to death; the grief and distress displayed by the remaining parent and adverse factors such as economic and social disadvantage if the main wage earner dies. Rutter's

investigation demonstrated that children's difficult behaviour does not stem from parental separation per se, the reason behind the separation produces the most damage. Where harmony exists between the parents, despite their marital status, fewer children display difficult behaviour.

An interesting exploration of the link between child sexual abuse and domestic violence in a sample of intrafamilial child sexual abuse cases was undertaken by Forman, (1992). Although this study was based on a small sample of women and their children it highlights the devastating effect of domestic violence on children. As Forman points out: domestic violence is used as a 'mask' to sexually abuse the child. The child is distanced from its mother by the use of violence to allow the sexual perpetration to occur. Children are often subjected to terrifying threats by the perpetrator to keep silent about the abuse taking place. The threat that their mothers will be killed by the abuser prevents the children from disclosing the true horror of what is happening to them. In cases where child sexual abuse is occurring alongside domestic violence the child involved will experience severe distress. A child who has frequently witnessed its mother being abused, who has to flee a violent home leaving all and sundry behind, who receives diminished care because the mother is too traumatised to recognise the child's pain, and has been a victim of sexual abuse, will undoubtedly

experience severe distress. Often, the only way children can draw attention to their distress is to behave in a way that is considered socially unacceptable. Small children who have not developed the capacity to articulate their anxieties 'act out' as a means of drawing attention to their difficulties, (Green, 1978). Green asserts that children who have been abused are more likely to engage in self-destructive behaviour than neglected or non-abused children. Witnessing parental violence may not be the sole cause of children's self harm. Forman's study illustrates the importance of maintaining the issue of domestic violence on the public agenda. The forgotten victims, (Elbow, 1982) of this iniquitous crime, children, are being brutally abused to satisfy individual sexual perversions. For these children domestic violence may be an outwardly symptom of a concealed disorder, (Forman, 1992). Similar to other investigations these findings are based on studies which narrowly defined the main problem areas. Researchers will need to broaden their investigations into this phenomenon in an effort to identify all the interrelated factors contributing to family violence.

An important factor which has been virtually ignored by researchers while undertaking their investigations is culture, in particular the religious beliefs of the different cultures and how these beliefs may mitigate or exacerbate the impact of

violence in family relationships. A closer examination of the religious beliefs of violent perpetrators and whether they are practising or non-practising members of their particular church may produce some interesting results. The religious belief of an individual may also be a composite part of this very complex phenomenon. There is also a great need for researchers to include children with disabilities in their analysis when assessing the risk to children from violent homes. Where violence exists in the home of a child with disabilities the potential risk to that child of direct and indirect abuse is enormous. Evidence regarding the effects of domestic violence on children with disabilities is not widely available. However, evidence demonstrates that children with disabilities are at a greater risk from parental abuse than a child who is perceived as normal, (Gelles, 1979).

Hughes, (1988) reports that it is the pre-school, abused-witness, low-income child who will develop psychological adjustment problems to the greatest degree. The participants of Hughes study were divided into age and abuse specific sub groups. Unlike other investigations which rely on the mother's interpretations of the child's behaviour, the children in this study were asked questions regarding their psychological and emotional well-being. A young child may not possess the cognitive ability to understand what is occurring around them.

Events which are poorly understood may increase children's stress levels and cause them to act in distressing ways. It may be necessary to divide children into more diverse groupings before a more positive correlation between a unique stress factor and a particular behaviour is discovered. Studies restricted by age of child and type of abuse will produce an incomplete picture of the events. More attention needs to be given to: gender, class, religion, historical experiences, heritage and in many cases sexuality before research findings can be considered unequivocal. Children are not a homogenous group of people who react to external stimuli in a similar manner. The rich diversity of children's innate characteristics and cognitive abilities, plus their contextual and historical situation, means that a child's particular experiences will be dealt with in a specific and unique manner. Moreover, results produced from investigations which rely on retrospective accounts to provide their data, particularly from children whose memory recall may produce mistakes, cannot be accepted as conclusive.

A recent review of the literature, (Fantuzzo & Lindquist, 1989) casts doubt on the findings of existing research. Several methodological problems are highlighted by this review. One of the most important issues raised by this review is definition of violence. Most of the studies undertaken have relied on one source of data collection only, the victim. This type of data

collection does not instil confidence in the results and questions of reliability and validity need to be raised. The most common standardized instrument used for determining the severity of the violence is the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), (Straus, 1979). It has long been recognised by many feminist researchers that this scale is not a reliable measure of marital violence. Women who use violence against their partners do so in self-defence, not to inflict injury or to achieve control, (for a full review of the limitations of the CTS, see Fantuzzo & Lindquist, 1989).

Findings collated from studies where broad groups of children were the object of investigation should be approached tentatively. Most studies failed to consider the type and frequency of the violence experienced by their population samples. It will be necessary to group children by age, class, gender, culture and discern whether they were bystanders or victims of the violence if accurate results are to be obtained. Another highly important issue which has been overlooked by most studies is the frequency of the violence to which children were exposed. In addition, the time lapse between the investigation and final violent episode has not been given due consideration. The experimental designs employed by most of the studies were inadequate, evidenced by the differential results of existing research. Future studies could avoid this happening by using a

variety of data collection methods to operationalize their concepts. Additionally, sociocultural and economic differences which could confound the results are not given enough attention. Although some of the data was obtained from clinical settings most of the information was derived from studies undertaken in refugees for abused women. Fantuzzo and Linquist, (1989) ask 'how representative are these children to the general population of children exposed to conjugal violence'. They question whether it is the 'shelter effect' which creates the adjustment problems in children of battered women. To evaluate this hypothesis future research needs to compare refugee children with non refugee children who have been exposed to marital combat. Finally, if similar errors are to be avoided in the future longitudinal research needs to be undertaken by investigators using a broad range of experimental design and control methods.

In summary, in the light of current evidence notwithstanding the partial nature of some research, it must be acknowledged that children who witness spouse abuse are harmed by their observations. The work of Harris, (1993) into the affects on children who witness homicide is supportive of the postulate that children who observe violence between their parents are substantially harmed. The comments offered by researchers regarding the harmful effects on witness-abused children are useful. They are useful because they provide

direction for future investigation. Glaring omissions in the existing literature regarding issues of race, religion, disability, gender and culture highlights the necessity for a deeper analysis of the problem.

Theoretical Explanations For The Intergenerational Transmission Of Violence.

Two accounts of family violence and the way it affects children's behavioural and psychological development, within the home environment, are social learning theory and the family disruption hypothesis, (Jaffe, Wolf, Wilson, 1990). Disciples of social learning theory adhere to the notion that most human behaviour is learned by vicarious learning, or modelling. Social learning theorists believe that adult behaviour is shaped by observing prominent others in early childhood. By observing the actions of others children acquire the rules of behaviour which are retained in memory and provide direction for future functioning. Social learning theory applied to marital violence centres on the parent - child relationship and the experiences the child undergoes within that arrangement which impacts on their behaviour in adulthood, (Bandura, 1973 ed. Bee & Mitchell, 1984). Thus early life experiences are believed to shape the child 's basic personality, which subsequently forms their future violent adult relationships. Learning theorists believe that

this behavioural pattern is transmitted by each subsequent generation thus establishing a 'cycle of abuse'.

Basically, investigators argue, witnessing or experiencing parental violence as a child results in perpetrating violence against others in adulthood, (Gelles, Straus, & Steinmetz, 1980 Pizzey, 1974, Walker, 1979). In addition, the contention is, that men exposed to parental violence in childhood are more likely to use violence against their female partners than men who were physically abused in childhood but did not observe violence between their parents. Furthermore, the likelihood is that women who witness violence between their parents will become the future victims. Browne, (1989) reviewed the literature and concluded that 94% of the empirical studies discovered a significant correlation between men who abused their partners and exposure to parental violence in childhood; 69% found a connection with spouse abuse and being the victim of childhood violence; and 31% did not. Other studies, (Rosenbaum & O' Leary, 1981, Kalmuss, 1984) explored the issue of differing responses in men who had witnessed parental violence and/or been physically abused as a child. Their findings demonstrate that men exposed to spouse abuse in early life are more likely to abuse their partners than men who are abused as a child. Gelles, (1990) also notes that exposure to marital violence in childhood increased the risk that men would abuse and women would become victims of male violence.

Conversely, Pagelow, (1981) found no evidence to support intergenerational effects on women, only men. Witnessing their fathers abusing their mothers resulted in men hitting their partners but did not determine the victimization of women. The risk to women of being beaten by a man who had witnessed parental violence in childhood was greater than if he had been abused by his primary carers. Kalmuss, (1984) notes early exposure to spouse abuse is a more potent predictor of violent behaviour in adulthood than childhood abuse or the presence of risk factors in a person's current relationship, (Kalmuss, 1984, Kalmuss & Seltzer, 1989). Although the findings are inconclusive as to the unique impact of family violence on individual adult actions, it appears that witnessing parental violence is a more virulent influence than being a victim of direct child abuse.

Evidence indicates that the intergenerational transmission of violence exists. However, childhood observations of parental belligerence cannot be considered the sole predictor of subsequent abusive behaviour in adult life. Nor would it be appropriate to presume that child abuse is correlated with later parental aggression. As Gelles and Conte, (1990) note: where violence appears to have been transmitted intergenerationally it is possibly due to a complex mix of cognitive and social processes. Emery, (1989) cautions those who allude to the notion that children who witness or experience direct abuse will

automatically become future perpetrators. Recognising that elevated distress has been detected in abused children, Emery warns that being abused in childhood is not necessarily indicative of future psychological distress. Numerous other features of the child's social circumstances existing alongside the abuse may be more detrimental to their psychological well-being. While some studies support the idea that abused children will experience extreme social and psychological deficits, others do not.

Social learning theory, (Bandura, 1973) as an explanation for intergenerational transmission of violence is too simplistic. This theory assumes that exposure to violence in childhood increases the likelihood of the child's subsequent violent behaviour towards significant others in adulthood. Despite the fact that research findings demonstrate that exposure to violence during childhood is a strong and consistent predictor of the subsequent and continuing problem of domestic violence, the methodological variations among the studies advises that a cautious approach towards the results is required, (Emery, 1989). Studies which support the social learning theory of violence, where growing up in a violent environment instructs and strengthens violent behaviour as an accepted method of conflict resolution or an outlet for human frustration, are questionable and not proven.

As a theory 'the cycle of violence' fails to inform us how early exposure to violence for many children does not precipitate violent behaviour in adult life. Nor does it explain why individuals who have not witnessed or experienced direct violence in childhood are capable of, and frequently engage in, vicious assaults on their partners. Violent behaviour is not necessarily the result of growing up in a violent family. The family is not the only aspect of a child's life which influences behaviour. Researchers need to investigate what it is that precipitates violent behaviour in men who have been raised in non-violent families. To presume that all children who witness marital abuse will develop violent tendencies during the maturation process is to accept that from the moment of birth children are passive recipients of stimuli who respond in a very mechanistic way like puppets on a string and that children are 'preprogrammed' to act in an abusive manner, (Gelles, 1979). Frankly, this is nonsense. As Dallos, (1993) notes, learning theory assumes that human behaviour is based on innate biological factors and that "the instinct for aggression "is 'wired' into us all" to ensure our survival. Furthermore, as aggressive behaviour is primarily associated with the male rather than the female in the majority of species this theory assumes that gender differences are 'natural and inevitable', (Dallos & McLaughlin 1993). It also assumes heterosexuality across the whole population and leaves no room for the sexual diversity which exists in all

cultures. Role identity is not as rigid and straightforward as this theory assumes, (Kalmuss, 1984). Little attention is paid to individual cognitions which may mediate or exacerbate the aggression displayed to a perceived threat. This idea is also insulting to the many men who never lift their hand to either threaten or abuse their partners and children. Widom, (1989) critically examined the 'violence begets violence' idea and concluded that existing knowledge regarding the long term consequences of family violence is restricted. Any conclusions drawn from existing research should be considered unqualified and approached cautiously. Widom advises that the inadequate methodological approach used by investigators undertaking the research has produced the many shortcomings in their work, (Widom, 1989).

Social learning theory does not reject the idea that positive and negative reinforcement, (Skinner, 1953) affects behaviour. However, followers of this theory assert that reinforcement is not necessary to aid children's learning. Knowledge can be gleaned simply as a result of observing others interacting. Some individuals may use violence to elicit a desired reaction from their partner and where conformity is achieved violence may act as a reinforcer for future abuse. Sonkin, (1987) reports that men abuse women because in the short term it is effective. Violence rapidly produces the desired response by terminating the

heightened conflict immediately. Although a cogent argument is offered by this school of thought regarding the way violent behaviour is transmitted intergenerationally, the reason why some men raised in violent homes do not abuse their partners, while others not exposed to spouse abuse develop violent tendencies in adulthood still remains unexplained. A closer examination of the type, intensity and purpose of the violence being witnessed by the child may extend our understanding of this particular problem. Moreover, future research should avoid limiting the exploration to dichotomous sampling populations. An extended approach is required which takes account of more than two generations of the same family. In addition, Kalmus, (1989) notes that other prime socialization contexts which are perhaps currently confounding existing results should be included in the investigation process. These include: peer relationships, school environment, observing television violence and other contextual settings which impact on the child's behavioural development. By following this line of enquiry researchers may eventually discover the mediating factors which exert a positive influence on children's behavioural development which will subsequently result in meaningful and non-violent adult relationships.

How Useful Is Family Disruption Theory As An Explanation For Domestic Violence?

Family disruption theory believes that a child's behaviour can only be understood, explained and altered by understanding how the whole family system operates. This explanation of children's behavioural adjustment is derived from both the family systems model, (Minuchin, 1974) and social learning theory, (Bandura, 1973). Family systems theory is premised on the tenet that each individual personality contributes to the entirety of the family system and if one of the component parts of that system 'breakdown' the whole system becomes dysfunctional. Where marital discord is a feature of family dynamics children may develop maladaptive behaviours in response to it to draw the focus of attention onto themselves. This benefits the whole family by returning it to a homoeostatic state, (Minuchin, 1974, Minuchin, 1985). Initially, the child's action may only serve to ease the stress on the rest of the family. To maintain equilibrium within the confines of the family home the child may have to continue behaving in a maladaptive manner. Recognising that this type of behaviour may serve to minimise parental violence, in the long term it may also be counter-productive for the child. Children's maladaptive behaviour may take on many forms. Aggressive behaviour may be one of the child's responses. Therefore, from the family disruption perspective adult

aggression does not stem from witnessing parental violence per se, it is derived from the maladaptive behaviour that the child develops in response to marital conflict.

A child's response to marital discord can be perceived as a three part process: 1. witnessing parental violence creates distress in the child, 2. the child reacts in a maladaptive way in an attempt to inhibit the family conflict, 3. the maladaptive behaviour is likely to continue as it will provide a homoeostatic function for the child and the rest of the family, (Emery, 1989). Evidence to support the initial component of the disruption theory is provided by the work of Cummings et al, (1981 1984). Cummings undertook a laboratory study involving simulated conflict between strangers. The researchers noted that children who witnessed these staged actions responded in a distressing way ranging from crying to increased aggression, (Cummings, Zahn-Waxler, & Radke-yarrow, 1981, 1984). Despite the fact that Cummings et al could not provide an explanation for the many individual variations, the findings of this study and several field investigations, (Emery, 1982) demonstrate that children exposed to adult conflict will experience some form of distress, even when they are not the primary respondents of the anger.

The second part of the process indicates that the child's distress induces either an emotional or instrumental reaction to

the conflict. The type of response will depend on the age of the child and how attached the child is to the parents. The final part of the process focuses on the function that the child's maladaptive behaviour provides for the child and the parents. If by acting in a maladaptive way the child manages to secure a return to stability for the whole family, then the child may maintain this behaviour to ensure that the family's return to equilibrium remains. Some children employ direct methods of intervention such as standing between or yelling at their parents, while others resort to indirect means such as banging and slamming doors to inhibit the conflict, (Jenkins, et al., 1989) The age of the children, (9-12 year old) in Jenkin's study is an important factor because it highlights the cognitive component of the children's reactions to parental conflict. Younger children tend not to demonstrate such a high level of cognitive reasoning when responding to conflict. Although some interesting data was obtained by these studies they should be questioned on ethical grounds. How ethical is it to manipulate small children in this manner?

Gullette, (1987) also notes that family violence needs to be understood in terms of the whole family system. Although Gullette advises that no exact model exists which represents family dynamics, it is common to find children behaving in disturbing ways to maintain equilibrium for the whole family. In

homes where violence predominates the child is so busy developing social and intellectual skills to manipulate the situation in order to avoid further conflict, other skills necessary for their adult life are lost to them. The mediating ingredient for reducing the distress experienced by the child was the quality of the parent-child relationship.

Gullette identified two types of abusing families. Violence in type one family is employed as a mode for formulating a hierarchy and preserving control of the whole family. Thus, discipline is imposed by the family member with the most power, normally the father. Type one family functions as a team and individual requirements are negated in support of the whole unit. Family members who deviate from this system of control experience either physical or psychological chastisement, and as Gullette notes, this system "created the context for marital and child abuse", (Gullette, 1987). The needs of the child of this type of family often go unmet because the requirements of the whole are greater than any one of its component parts. As long as this system of control is maintained children usually develop well. However, if a breakdown in the system occurs children of type one families find it difficult to handle failure and display elevated levels of stress. Once the consistent and powerful controls (Gullette, 1987) are removed this group of children act in a violent way.

They use violence to achieve a particular outcome. The restoration of control and hierarchical equilibrium.

Type two families use violence in a random way. Violence can be employed by any family member in response to a particular stress. There is little or no cooperation among the family members and for most of the time family members compete for the coveted position of "decision maker". Children growing in type two families tend to be left to their own devices and develop in either a 'positive' or 'negative' way depending on the amount of parental support available. The use of violence is accepted as normal because it is perceived as a pathological defect.

Similar to most of the descriptive studies undertaken in this area of family life Gullette's findings are inconclusive. This is doubtless due to the methodological approach used. The retrospective accounts of parents and children (mostly women and girls) from marital violent families; accounts from professionals working with marital violence and anecdotal reporting provided the data for this study. Although some interesting points are noted Gullette's study can only be perceived as a springboard for future research in this area.

Despite the dubious and inadequate nature of the methodologies employed in the studies discussed above, the likelehood is that

some children will resort to violence in adulthood as a consequence of intergenerational transmission. However, existing evidence indicates that the 'violence begets violence' notion cannot be unequivocally accepted, as it only provides a partial picture of family violence. As Emery, (1989) succinctly puts it " it must be noted that the majority of those who experience abuse in their families of origin are not abusive in their families of procreation". In addition, the issues raised by this theory need extended to take account of the structural oppression families encounter in their daily lives. To focus on family dynamics within the home setting alone is to indicate that the problem lies with individual family members and that external forces play no part. These ideas could be seized upon to reduce the provision of services to families. If violence is perceived as an 'family problem' it will provide the impetus for the withdrawal of state provision. When in fact what is needed is policies to support and assist the family, (Kashani, et al., 1992).

Although family disruption theory attempts to reconcile the disparate nature of existing theory by intergrating two perspectives, it still fails to explain the reason underpinning why some witness-abused children resort to violence in later life while others do not. Many explanations are offered for the cause of intergenerational transmission of violence but few are

proposed as to what inhibits it. One of the main criticisms of disruption theory is noted by Dallos and McLaughlin, (1993). They concur that: "the inherent inequalities of power which exists between the genders" has only been dealt with in a cursory manner by existing research.

Feminist researchers, (Yllo and Bogard 1988, Dobash and Dobash, 1992, Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). perceive violence towards women as a consequence of the patriarchal structure of society, which is irrefutable in the light of existing evidence. From a feminist perspective witnessing or experiencing violence as a child is not predictive of subsequent adult abuse. However, feminist researchers point out that witnessing parental violence does influence the attitudes of both men and women and that it is the dominant patriarchal attitudes, that perceive women as subordinate to men, which are intergenerationally transmitted. A study undertaken by Alexander, et al., (1991) which investigated the intergenerational transmission of violence among dating partners provides the evidence that, although male violence is not assured by witnessing parental abuse, their attitudes towards women evidently are. Alexander's findings demonstrate that abusive men hold more traditional beliefs regarding women than non-abusive men.

Alexander's research indicates that it is the dominance of both patriarchal values and witnessing parental violence in abusive homes which eventually determines adult male violence. The family influences more than the behaviour of children, it is also the inculcator of attitudes, values, beliefs and social mores. This type of analysis may partly explain why some witness-abused children resort to violence in adulthood, while others do not. The combination of patriarchal attitudes and parental violence in families of origin may be the most powerful predictor of the subsequent abuse in the families of procreation, (Emery, 1989).

To summarize, it is the dominant patriarchal attitudes, (Alexander, et al. 1991) which are transmitted intergenerationally. This results in the sexist bias in abusing men and demonstrates that violence towards women emerges as a consequence of the privileged status conferred on men and as "head of the family" they consider it their right to abuse their partners. The family is the main unit of socialization for children and even where violence does not dominate the daily functioning of the family, in most homes male needs are considered priority. In most social settings males learn to expect their needs to be given paramount consideration. It is these attitudes which are transmitted intergenerationally. This results in the abuse of women in intimate relationships if they

'fail' to live up to male expectations.

Conclusion.

This section has focused on the effects on children who witness parental violence. Solid agreement amongst researchers regarding the effects on children who witness parental violence is absent. Competing theories make it difficult to reach a firm conclusion as to whether it is witnessing parental violence which affects children's behavioural and psychological development, or other complex factors. It is clear that this issue is multi-faceted and careful consideration must be given to all of its component parts. To simply focus on one aspect of the problem will result in the insidious effects on witness-abused children being overlooked, (Moore, 1989).

Social learning theory and family disruption theory provide only partial insight into the intergenerational transmission of violence. Much more research needs to be undertaken in this area before confidence in the results can be achieved. Results based on facile interpretations of human behaviour cannot be considered qualified. Feminist theory provides an acceptable explanation for male abuse but provides no unique answer for the distressing behaviour observed in witness-abused children. This is the main challenge for future research. The devastating

effects on children involved with domestic violence can no longer be ignored. Children symbolise all that is good about human nature. They deserve much better protection than they are currently receiving.

CHAPTER THREE.

IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN.

"The way a society treats its children is an acid test of its civilisation" (Poverty and Inequality, p1).

This chapter will illustrate how social factors are integral to the well-being of children involved with marital discord. Issues of housing, education and poverty will be covered in this section. Children from relatively stable homes will doubtless suffer as a consequence of social deprivation. However, where domestic violence exists alongside social deprivation a double jeopardy faces those children who are caught up in it. Information which addresses the direct consequences of social deprivation on children when coupled with domestic violence is scarce. The source material used to illustrate the difficulties facing children fleeing violent homes centres mostly on women's experience. Feminist writers must undertake to raise public awareness regarding the plight of children fleeing violent homes. Future research must be child - centred, otherwise as Kumar, (1993) notes we are relying on a variety of data collected from a wide range of sources which often overlooks or only cursorily notes children's experience. In addition, the quality of the

evidence varies and in some studies reliable information regarding the position of children is unavailable to us.

Housing: the necessary commodity.

One of the most important commodities needed by children when fleeing domestic violence is housing. The opportunity for women and children to leave violent relationships largely depends on finding safe, secure, suitable and permanent housing. The lack of a decent income and the inability to afford high priced private accommodation invariably means that most women leaving violent homes will require local authority property.

The state's response to providing decent affordable homes since 1979 has been deplorable. Britain has undoubtedly moved to a more individualistic and non interventionist form of society. Drastic cuts in public spending in recent years has meant that more people have had to become self-reliant or turn to their wider family for support. An example of this is the move from residential living for the elderly to "community care". Superficially, the concept of "community care" appears innocuous and a move towards empowering the individual. However, an in depth analysis of the issue clearly highlights the iniquitous reason underpinning it, (Stark and Flitcraft, 1988); community care is a cost cutting exercise to save the state money. This

places the burden of care for older persons, people with disabilities and all groups of dependent people onto the communities they live in. This has resulted in far reaching consequences for women who comprise the greatest proportion of carers and those needing services.

Mama, (1989) has reviewed the current housing crisis and notes that it is exacerbated by the 'right to buy' policy. The right to buy policy has seriously eroded access to local authority property for all women. It would be unusual for women fleeing violent homes not to approach the local authority for housing, as the majority of them have no independent financial means to purchase a property and are bringing dependent child/ren with them. Trying to negotiate for housing following the flight from a violent home is a distressing experience for women and their children despite their origins. However, the position for black women and children is made worse by reason of their colour. Having black skin places women and children at an added disadvantage. The difficulty for black women and children is that they are dealing with a state which is patriarchal, imperialist and racist, (Malos & Gill, 1993, Victim Support, 1992, WAFE, 1992, Kumar, 1993).

A recent study undertaken by Women's Aid Federation, (Malos & Hague, 1993) demonstrates the enormous difficulties faced by

black women trying to access safe, alternative homes for themselves and their children. Serious consideration regarding the effects of racism on black women and children before they are rehoused is necessary if potential risks to them are to be avoided. Black women fleeing violence with their children should given the opportunity to exercise an informed choice as to where they would prefer to live. They should not be rehoused expeditiously by ill-informed housing officers who base their decisions on assumption rather than need.

Sexty's, (1990) analysis of the current housing crisis clearly indicates that it is government policy which is at fault. The Government's diminished responsibility for providing decent affordable homes over the last decade has drastically reduced women's chances of obtaining local authority housing. This has been further exacerbated by the move towards the private sector to provide more homes for rent. The 1988 Housing Act abolished the new registration of 'fair rents'. It was replaced by 'market' rents which meant that landlords could set rents at whatever price they saw fit. This shift towards a system which is underpinned by ability to pay, rather than need, means that women seeking homes for rent are disproportionately disadvantaged because they lack the resources to pay, (WAFE, 1992).

A major consequence of the trend towards non-interventionist policies and the move towards the private sector to provide rented accommodation is that women on low incomes have lost out. Sexty's view is that women are disadvantaged by reason of their low income status, which in most cases results from being the primary carers of children. Sexty provides us with a detailed examination of the difficulties facing all groups of women trying to access a decent home. Changes in housing policy have rapidly reduced women's chances of being allocated a property, even where children are involved. However, the situation for Black and ethnic minority women, older and lesbian women seeking housing is far more difficult. The lack of security of tenure associated with private rented accommodation has also increased the vulnerability amongst all groups of women, (see Malos & Hague 1993, Burrows & Hunter, 1990, Marshall, 1988).

Sexty's work elucidates the sexist, racist and class based nature of British social policy which is clearly premised on the assumption of the traditional, white, middle class and heterosexual family, which perceives women's primary roles as domestic and caring ones. In Sexty's view these assumptions disadvantage women and, therefore children, as it restricts their claim to equal access to all necessary resources. Additionally, it further disadvantages women who belong to other types of

social living patterns which deviate from the conventional family form, (see also Binney V. et. al 1981).

Brailey, (1986) notes that the process of seeking safe, alternative accommodation is fraught with difficulties. The pressures on women to remain in oppressive homes is overwhelming. Social policy is constructed to dissuade women from living independently with their children. Women and children are prevented from leaving oppressive and very often life threatening situations because they are denied access to the very resources which would ensure their safe passage out of a violent home. Yet evidence is clear, (Moore, 1989, Pizzey, 1974) children who escape from living in unsatisfactory and violent homes display less anxiety and demonstrate a more positive outlook towards their future.

The work of Kumar, (1993) illustrates the direct link between children's ill-health and housing deprivation. A sharp increase in homelessness during the eighties has been noted, particularly among many lone parent and ethnic minority families. Low income and a lack of financial resources has increased the need for these families to spend long periods in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. This living situation has adverse effects on the health of children; elevated morbidity and mortality rates are of note among children living in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. A

high incidence of accidents, acute infections, respiratory diseases, arrested physical and psychological development has been recorded. Numerous children are 'thrown' into this quagmire as a result of domestic violence. The cumulative effects of social deprivation on children's health is likely to run on into adulthood, resulting in serious long term health problems. (see The Black Report, 1980). It is clear that the Government must halt and reverse their current policies if children are to get access to safe, secure and habitable homes. The Government has abdicated its responsibility, (Sexty, 1990) towards its children and, therefore, Britain's future.

Education: the effect of parental violence on academic performance.

Kumar, (1993) presents us with a startling analysis of the current situation regarding the state of children's health, education and home conditions as a result of poverty. Although, Kumar only refers to marital discord in a cursory way, issues of race, class and gender are thoroughly discussed. Kumar notes that the presence of high unemployment significantly increases the potential for marital disharmony. Stressful home circumstances may result in children taking up part time paid employment which reduces their time for study. It is often the older children of disharmonious homes who have to vacate them

because of limited finances. According to Stockley et al., (1989) domestic violence significantly accounts for the high numbers of young people living on the streets because they are homeless. Many young people find the streets preferable to living in a violent home. These young people never get to finish their education therefore their life chances are severely restricted.

Moore, (1989) points out that children living in discordant homes display excessive emotional behaviours in school. The child becomes withdrawn and internalizes his/her anxiety which often results in underachievement. Poor school attendance among children from violent homes is another common feature often observed. This is due in part to the children being too tired to attend school because of the previous night's violence. Additionally, some mother's keep their children at home as part of their protection plan. Evidence, (Pizzey, 1974) demonstrates that children from violent homes often take on the role of protector. Children become the "parent child" and regularly intervene to protect their mother from her violent partner. The potential risk to children intervening in a violent outburst is extreme. The composite of domestic violence, low social class, not of the indigenous population, poor housing and in many cases the itinerant lifestyle of children caught up in

marital violence, results in a standard of education that renders the child to a life time of deprivation.

One of the major difficulties for children fleeing violence is finding an alternative school while they are resident in a women's refuge. Project workers of Wearside Women in Need (Organisation which provides services to women and children fleeing domestic violence) have few difficulties in accessing places in local schools for children staying in the refuge. However, this may be underpinned by the 30% surplus in school places available in Sunderland at this current time. Nursery provision is not so easy to access for those children who enter the refuge. When children enter the refuge with their mothers following a violent episode they are usually so traumatised they often refuse to attend school. Hughes, (1986) notes that children living in refuges experience huge emotional problems. These include: poor academic performance, school phobia and difficulties in concentration which has an affect on their school work. McKay, (1981) produced similar results and noted that children from violent homes display heightened aggressive behaviour and a reluctance to apply themselves academically. Some women only stay short periods in the refuge. Children are uprooted several times before the final separation comes. Levine, (1975) notes that the oscillating nature of families experiencing domestic violence results in disruptive and

aggressive behaviour and in many cases a high incidence of truancy occurs.

Persistent truancy, (Levine, 1975) is often a feature of children living in violent homes. Parents in Levine's study highlighted a link between specific events of violence in the marital home and truanting behaviour. Even after allowing for other common factors which lead to truanting behaviour an elevated rate of truancy was found where parental violence existed. Kumar, (1993) provides us with an overview of the problem and highlights the difficulties when trying to analyse the findings. Collecting and analysing the statistics in a reliable way is a complex procedure because of the way in which the data is recorded. How proximal truancy is linked to domestic violence cannot be clearly determined. However, a strong association between family circumstances and truancy has been noted, (see Gray & Jesson, 1990 Davies, 1980).

As a single factor education deprivation cannot explain the anxiety and distress observed in children from discordant homes. However, as a compounder considerable evidence exists which illustrates the importance of a decent education to increase a child's life chances, (Rutter et. al., 1986, Swann Report, 1985). Researchers imply that compared to their white counterparts black children perform less well academically and that it is due

to the effects of racial discrimination and social deprivation rather than individual IQ, (see Jesson & Gray, 1991, Drew & Gray, 1990). Although racial discrimination is partially applied to black and ethnic minority groups, racialism ensures that black and ethnic minority children tend to originate from homes where economic and social deprivation is more extreme. Black children are not only socially and educationally deprived, racialism oppresses them too.

There can be no absolute guarantee that the findings of social research are valid. Reliability of any research depends on how the data was collected, the source it was gleaned from and what variables were considered for investigation. Numerous pieces of research into educational achievement under similar conditions have been undertaken. Subsequent studies have confirmed the findings of previous ones. Kumar, (1993) acknowledges this situation but still advises that some of the research findings should be approached tentatively. In the course of reviewing the literature it is clear that researchers have ignored the impact of domestic violence on children's ability to achieve in school. Children from violent homes experience anxiety and distress which debilitates their concentration span. This situation has an impact on their written work, (Hughes & 1986). As the impact of domestic violence on educational achievement has been ignored it indicates that the findings of existing studies are dubious.

The growing body of knowledge emerging from the refuge movement regarding the difficulties children from violent homes experience with their schooling indicates the necessity to undertake further research which considers the impact of domestic violence on children's educational achievement.

Poverty: the inevitable outcome.

Women are further prevented from leaving their violent partners by the constraints of their financial dependence. The facts are well documented that women on average earn less than men, (Jordan & Waine, 1986/87). Women who operate in the paid labour market are overrepresented among the low income groups, (Low Pay Unit, 1992). The main reason offered for this continuing situation is women's domestic and child care responsibilities. For the greater part of their working lives women work part time to fit in with the needs of the family, which inevitably means low wages. When women escape violent homes they are often forced to relinquish a degree of financial support. The capricious nature of the labour market and the limited hours women are available to work makes it difficult for them to find well paid full-time employment to support themselves and their children. Women are further disadvantaged from obtaining suitable employment by the lack of child care facilities. The statutory duty to provide pre-school nursery

provision was removed from local authorities by the 1980 Education Act. This has meant considerably fewer child care places which are crucial to women needing to work in paid employment.

A number of policy changes to the welfare benefits system since 1979 exacerbated the already disadvantaged financial position for women. One of the changes which directly affected the position of single women was the replacement of supplementary benefit by income support. A study undertaken by the Child Poverty Action Group, (1987) demonstrated that lone parents would lose out with the changes. In the majority of cases the decision to terminate their violent relationships often means women will become lone parents. A consequence of having to leave the marital home in a hurry is to go empty handed. This means women often have to seek financial assistance to establish themselves following the breakdown of their partnerships. The replacement of the single emergency payment by the social fund was one of the most damaging changes to occur. Financial provision under the social fund is based on a loans system. Most payments are given in loans which have to be repaid from other benefits. This places considerable pressure on women who are already trying to care for their children on inadequate incomes, (Glendening, 1987). This is hardly encouraging to desperate needy women who are trying to protect their children from injury.

A retrogressive step by the government in 1986 severely reduced women's access to an adequate income to support themselves and their children. This has meant that many children who have been forced to leave their homes because of violence are living in poverty. The Black Report, (1980) draws our attention to the devastating effects poverty has on children. Black, et. al. used graveyard evidence to demonstrate the long term detrimental effects of poverty on people's lives. Although domestic violence cuts across class boundaries the Black report illustrates that it is children from the lower end of the class scale who experience the impact of poverty to the greatest degree.

The work of Kumar, (1993) illustrates that one of the major causes of child poverty is the increase in lone parent families since the early 1980's. The price paid by children living in lone parent families is an elevated risk of poverty. In 1990/91 approximately 74% of children from lone parent families were living on less than half the average income. The lack of employment opportunities for women with child care responsibilities increases the deprivation faced by many children living in lone parent families. One of the major identified contributors to child poverty is unemployment. Research indicates that the majority of children living in lone parent families live with their mother, (Haskey, 1990). Since economic activity is lower among lone mothers, children fleeing

violent homes are more likely to grow up in poverty than any other group of children in society.

However, the position for some black and other ethnic minority children is particularly adversely affected. Not only are they encountering poverty to the extreme as children of lone parents, they are further disadvantaged by the operation of structural inequalities which ensures continuing racism. An example of this situation is the position of some black and ethnic minority women who are prevented from leaving their abusing partners because they have no recourse to financial assistance. Under the one-year rule some black and ethnic minority women have no access to public monies if they have lived in Britain less than twelve months. In addition, women subject to this immigration status may also face deportation if other forms of economic support are unattainable to them. According to the Southall Black Sisters women in this position fear seeking assistance and remain living with their abusing partners risking their personal safety, and in some cases that of their children, (Mama, 1989, Home Affairs committee, Third Report, 1993).

A strong link between children's ill-health, low income, inadequate diet and poor housing has been identified. Where domestic violence exists alongside multiple deprivation it will further exacerbate the deterioration in children's health.

Evidence is clear, children fleeing violent homes are more likely to end up living in poverty than any other group of children. As a society we need to inoculate against this malaise, domestic violence, to ensure that children involved in it are not bypassed altogether.

Butler, (1993) in her article "Do children come first under the Child Support Act" outlines what this Act means to lone parents in terms of financial support from their ex-partners and the violence which might occur if women are asked to give details of the absent parents whereabouts. Where violence was a precursor to the breakdown of the relationship a clause to the Act allowing women to waiver their responsibility to cooperate with agency workers was granted. If the authorised agency worker believes that there are 'reasonable grounds' that either the woman or her child/ren are at risk of harm from the absent parent, the caring parent can be absolved from their duty to cooperate to retrieve maintenance. The decision to absolve the woman of her duty to cooperate depends on the information given by the woman in question. Imparting personal details of their violent relationships will be a painful experience for many women. The guidelines recommend that the remaining parent has the right to be believed unless the woman's assertions are "innately contradictory or dubious". Despite the recommendations many advice workers believe that Child Support Officers will minimise

the use of this clause in favour of recovering maintenance. Where the woman's statement is not upheld deductions from her income support will be made until the matter is resolved. The guidelines recommend that before deductions are made the welfare of the child must be considered. However, the welfare of the child is not paramount within this Act. There are grounds to believe that loyalty to their agencies will supersede all considerations to the families Child Support Officers are authorised to help. It appears that the 'paramouncy principal' of the Children Act 1989 is only to be acknowledged where money is not involved.

To summarise: there is a strong link between domestic violence and poverty and its multiple adverse consequences. Restricting children's access to a decent home and a level of income which allows them to eat a nutritious diet will increase their ill-health, (Black Report, 1980, Kumar, 1993). Inflammatory rhetoric will not resolve or eradicate the difficulties encountered by children from violent homes, positive action is what they require. The evidence collated since the early 1970's suggests that the benefits system was deliberately overhauled to curtail the economic independence of women, thus restricting their ability to live without a male partner within the context of the nuclear family.

Dominelli, (1988) asserts that the welfare state was erected on the assumption of "white male supremacy" and that policy is implemented to re-inforce these values forcing women and children to be dependent on men. In her view policy is implemented to strengthen the divisions of class, race and gender to ensure that traditional values underpinned by the white, middle class, male perspective of society continues to dominate.

The evidence to support Dominelli's view is overwhelming. For example the right to buy policy has resulted in an ever decreasing housing stock. This has led to women seeking high priced rented accommodation or bed and breakfast living arrangements as a sanctuary from violence. Welfare benefits are an inadequate source of income. Unequal employment opportunities for women usually results in them seeking financial support from the state following their relationship breakdown. This situation usually results in women and children living in poverty. Until women and children are perceived as individuals in their own right and not just appendages their position remains vulnerable.

Conclusion.

In this section the impact of domestic violence on the social well-being of children has been considered. Witnessing violence

at any age can be traumatic. Couple this trauma with the social disadvantage some children will experience as a direct result of marital violence and the future for them is bleak. Evidence is clear social deprivation inhibits a child's life chances in all areas. Children's social well-being is drastically reduced by the warring behaviour of their parents. Additionally, for some children the patriarchal, racist and imperialist nature of the state to which they belong will further exacerbate their already deprived position.

The Women's Movement placed the issue of domestic violence firmly on the public agenda in the early 1970's. Government's response to their campaign has been slow and hitherto piecemeal. Unless a concerted effort is made by the present day government and any future governments many more children will suffer. In some cases where domestic violence exists fatalities will occur. As a society we need to press for change to the current legislation regarding the protection of children.

Areas of concern regarding children caught up in marital conflict which should be addressed by future research have been identified by Women's Aid Federation England, (1992, p.52). All of the identified issues are of immense importance. However the recommendation to consider the impact of domestic violence on children's social circumstances has been omitted. This is

disappointing. The social well-being of children is crucial to their holistic development. Future research needs to illustrate this point and use their findings to pressurise government to alter direction of its current policies regarding children involved with marital conflict.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIAL WORK AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A GUIDE TO HELPING CHILDREN.

It is clear, domestic violence and child abuse are not mutually exclusive events. Despite the fact that statutory agencies are duty bound to protect children, they have no legal responsibilities for assisting domestic violence victims, (Smith, 1990, Dallos & McLaughlin, 1993). For far too long statutory agencies have deposited their responsibilities with the voluntary sector who struggle to help victims of domestic violence with the minimum of resources. The quality of the service available to women and children seeking assistance from statutory agencies will initially depend on the attitude of the social worker who interviews them. After reviewing the literature, four areas of importance have been identified for discussion. Attitudes are a set of beliefs that are inculcated into us from birth. Personal and cultural beliefs inform our perceptions about other individuals. The response of social workers to domestic violence is not only shaped by their legal duties but by their personal and cultural beliefs also. This issue will be the focus of the first section. A number of intervention programmes have been developed to assist children overcome the distress experienced as bystanders of parental abuse. The second part of this section will focus on the effectiveness of these programmes. In the third section the most effective way to apply the Children Act 1989 will be presented.

Finally, the need and importance of multi-disciplinary consultation and cooperation regarding children who witness parental violence will be outlined.

Attitudes of Social Workers.

Unprovoked attacks on children are perceived with horror and unequivocal disgust. Although professionals are quick to respond to physical and sexual abuse of children, (Elbow, 1982) ambivalent attitudes towards 'deserving' and 'undeserving' women has restricted the route to effective help for children from violent homes, (Bradford University Issues Programme, 1979). Social workers need to recognise that domestic violence is a serious problem, rather than an issue of concern where child protection matters are highlighted, (Kelly, 1992). Bruised bodies and broken bones clearly indicate that a child has been injured. The damage inflicted on children involved with domestic violence is often 'hidden'. This is because children from violent homes rarely come to the attention of the child protecting agencies, (Maynard 1985). Elbow, (1982) claims that children of abused women "are the 'forgotten victims' of family violence". Until social workers recognise that their needs are important, the distress experienced by children of violent relationships will continue to debilitate their emotional, behavioural and psychological welfare.

Research shows that statutory agencies have offered a piecemeal service to children of abused women. Evidence indicates that social workers are either ignoring, or they are inadequate at assisting children of violent marriages. Binney's, (1981) study highlighted the most effective forms of help available to women and children trying to escape a violent home. The most useful sources of help were family and friends. Social workers who were knowledgeable about the resources available to abused women were found to be of some help. Practitioners who lacked an understanding of the issues involved with marital abuse were punitive in their approach towards abused women. Often the only help available from the social services to abused women and their children was to 'take the children into care', (Pizzey, 1974). Evidence indicates that abused women are more likely to lose their children than non-abused women, (Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). As it is working class families who mainly come to the attention of statutory bodies, it appears fair to point out that working class children are the ones most likely to be removed from their mothers care. The fear that their children will be removed from them inhibits women from seeking assistance and reinforces their belief that neither they nor their children are deserving of protection.

Maynard, (1985) presents an explanation of why most social workers respond negatively when approached by battered women for

assistance. The lack of interest displayed by social workers is underpinned by their paradoxical attitudes of women's role as wife/mother and not as individuals. Additionally, social workers' impressions of women who are abused and their beliefs as to why men beat their partners further exacerbate the plight of abused women when seeking statutory assistance. Although social workers perceive women as central figures of the family, their individual needs are given infrequent attention. A woman who seems to concentrate on her individual needs and appears to be failing to fulfil her wife/mother role is more likely to be viewed negatively, (Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). Abuse of women is seldom the main reason social workers become involved with families. In the majority of cases concern for the child's welfare is paramount. Maynard, (1985) notes, that the main concern of social workers is to 'restore a domestic equilibrium' and keep the family unit intact in the best interests of the child, even if this operates against the interests and safety of the woman involved. It would appear that women are only encouraged to separate from their abusing partners if social workers believe that the children are in physical danger, (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

The greatest barrier for social workers to overcome is patriarchy. Social workers need to recognise that their own philosophy and every day practices are an integral part of the

patriarchal structures which govern every day living. The continued existence of patriarchal structures ensures men's domination over women on a social, sexual and economic level, (Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). Until social workers come to grips with the concept of patriarchy and its devastating consequences the subordination of women and children will be maintained, (Maynard, 1985). Moreover, social workers need to recognise that one of the most effective ways of protecting children is the empowerment of women. Empowering women by encouraging them to recognise their strengths, as well as offering practical assistance to support them in their role as carers, equates with protecting children, (Carlson, 1984).

Stark, Flitcraft, (1988) and Home, (1991) outline the way forward for child protection workers. Firstly, their knowledge base and practice needs to move away from the single moral paradigm, (Stark & Flitcraft, 1988) which currently underpins their work in which women's inherent capacity to nurture is highly regarded and presumed. Sadly, the majority of social workers still hold the mother responsible for the abuse of the child regardless of who inflicts the injury. A common phrase heard in social work offices is 'failure to protect'. This is because most practitioners do not understand the complexity of the problem they are dealing with. The most appropriate way to protect a child is by advocating for the mother also, (O'Hara,

1993). Practitioners need to recognise that the safety and protection of children is equated with, and cannot be divorced from, safeguarding those who ultimately look after them. The refuge movement provides the main support to women and children fleeing violent homes. An abundance of evidence regarding the issue of domestic violence is readily available to those seeking its use. Practitioners who wish to work effectively with children of abused women need to recognise and utilize these resources to expand their knowledge. A closer working relationship needs to be established between the workers of the refuge movement, abused women and their children and social workers. By working together as a team all practitioners dealing with domestic violence could become more skilful. (Home, 1991).

Methods of Intervention.

Several authors, (Ball, 1990, Jaffe et al., 1990, Alessi & Hearn, 1984, Wilson et al., 1989, Grusznski et al., 1988, Hughes, 1982, Moore, 1989) present intervention models for working with witness-abused children. The primary objective of intervention is perhaps best spelt out by Carlson, " intervention with the child may, in essence, constitute the best form of primary prevention of adult domestic violence", (Carlson, 1984, p. 160). When children enter the refuge system there can be no doubt that they are in a state of crisis. Swift action that

works to ameliorate the distress being experienced by children will in the short term be beneficial. The quicker children are settled into a constructive daily routine the sooner they will be able to cope with their new situation. This could be achieved by accessing nursery and school places to ensure that children's education continues. In addition, contact with their extended families and friends should be rapidly sought. Actions of this nature would reduce the impact on children who have to flee their violent homes. However, crisis intervention is not a panacea for curing children's distress. Crisis work should only be perceived as the beginning of intervention with children. Follow up work must be undertaken.

Group work with witness-abused children appears to be the favoured method of intervention after they have settled into refuge life. Most intervention programmes consist of ten sessions conducted on a weekly basis. A number of issues related to the children's experiences are discussed during these sessions. They are also encouraged in social skills and given information of how to protect themselves from their parents violence. Although this is an extremely new area of study positive reports regarding intervention with children of battered women are being articulated, (Alessi & Hearn, 1984, Grusznski et al., 1988, Hughes, 1989). The only authors to date which have evaluated the success of intervention with this group of children

is Jaffe, et al., (1990). Their findings indicate that children who display 'mild or moderate' levels of behaviour difficulties are the ones to benefit from the short group programmes. However, children exposed to frightening levels of parental violence require more intensive support. Although the authors acknowledge the shortcomings of their evaluation, they concur that practitioners should be encouraged by the work that is being undertaken with witness-abused children. Ball, (1990) also recommends that this work should be supported and that central government must be encouraged to provide the money to fund these programmes.

The 'success' of any intervention programme will be determined by longitudinal research only. Nevertheless, any assistance given to this group of children has to be encouraged. However, when workers are developing their programmes they will have to be cognizant of the diversity of their cliental. Existing evidence does not demonstrate that issues of culture, age, class, gender, religion or disability have been thoroughly considered. For example, a child whose sight is totally impaired may not fully understand why it feels so distressed. Moreover, the itinerant lifestyle of witness-abused children suggests that a whole network of intervention programmes are required. Children leaving refuge programmes will need referring on to other supporting agencies. The need for locally based groups to assist

children living in their own communities is vitally important. Informal 'drop'-in centres staffed by skilled workers where children are provided space and time to talk about their experiences need to be fully supported by all sections of the community. Telephone helplines are another important source of help for children in times of crisis. Social workers need to recognise the importance of these resources and continue to challenge those with the funds to encourage the development of them. This work should also be done in partnership with the voluntary organisations who already provide the main support to women and children fleeing violence.

Although direct work with children is highly important it will be ineffective unless the oppressive social conditions which render children powerless are vehemently challenged. As Davis, (1991) points out, a strong commitment towards changing oppressive practice from those who work in the child protection field is required immediately.

Working With The Children Act 1989.

The Children Act 1989 has been hailed as one of the most revolutionary pieces of legislation in modern times, (Freeman, 1992). Yet the Act contains no special provision for children fleeing violent homes. Under the Act children fleeing violent

homes should be recognised as "children in need" s. 17. While this Act imposes a general duty on Local Authorities to provide services to children in need, the Act does not provide specific resources for children to escape violent homes with their mothers. If applied effectively the Act could provide services to protect children involved with marital conflict, (O'Hara 1993). Schedule 2 paragraph 5 (1) provides Local Authorities with the power to financially assist the abuser to pay for accommodation if they are willing to vacate the marital home. This part of the Act needs to be used more effectively to protect children living with a violent parent.

Working in partnership with parents is perceived as the most effective way of delivering services to children. Social workers need to work in partnership with mothers of children needing protection from violent homes. Instead of advising women to give up their homes and enter refuges, s. 17, monies should be used to encourage the abusing man to vacate the marital home and transfer the tenancy rights to the women in the best interests of the child.

The Guidance and Regulations of the Children Act 1989 (Vol. 1 Section 4. 31) recommends: "that where possible, abusers rather than children should be removed from the home". Where an abuser continues to harass the family after his departure both criminal

and civil law should be used to greater effect to prevent further distress. The Pace Act 1984 gives the police the power of arrest where there "is need to prevent injury to or protect a child, or other vulnerable person, from the offender" (Section 25 (3)). The Home Office has suggested that this should apply to cases of domestic violence. Unless this issue is embraced more sincerely than it currently is children will continue to live in homes which are potentially life threatening.

Court Welfare and Contact Arrangements.

The Children's Legal Centre, (1993) propose that where domestic violence is an issue practitioners and representatives of the judiciary need to carefully consider the potential danger to the child and its mother before contact and residence arrangements are decided. Existing evidence indicates that court welfare officers are not sufficiently equipped to deal with the issue of domestic violence and its potential adverse consequences for children. Even where it is clearly demonstrated that a man has a long history of violence towards his ex-partner, court welfare officer's are failing to recognise this as a serious issue. Unsupervised contact orders are often granted because the court welfare officers report fails to mention the possible risk to the child. Yet evidence presented in previous chapters demonstrates where violence towards the mother exists, the risk to the child

of physical and sexual abuse is four times greater, (Forman, 1992, Gelles & Conte, 1990). There is good reason to believe that abuse of children further continues following parental separation, (Hester & Radford, 1992). Where allegations of abuse have been made against the absent parent arrangements for supervised contact by a third party should be made.

Social Workers and Private Proceedings.

There appears to be a reluctance among social workers to become involved in private proceedings as witnesses where a child has become the subject of a private contested hearing following a s. 47 investigation. It is presumed that the child's welfare is safeguarded once the perpetrator has departed the family home. This is not necessarily the case. The Children Act 1989 enables social workers to participate in private proceedings and for many children this course of action may be the only way to ensure their safety. Where children are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, local authorities have a duty to enquire to establish, "whether the authority should make any application to the court, or exercise any of their powers under this Act, with respect to the child". (s. 47 (3), Children Act 1989). The Children's Legal Centre advocate that a social worker's duty is to 'seek to become involved in private proceedings where this is necessary for the protection of the child'. The initiation of

private proceedings should not provide the 'green light' for social workers to retreat. Mothers who are trying to protect their children from abusing men by terminating their relationships should be offered a higher level of support. Supporting mothers in this way would be beneficial to the child as it would ensure them greater protection. It is also a sign of good anti-discriminatory practice. Guidelines regarding the involvement of social workers in private court proceedings need to be developed and implemented as a matter of urgency.

Training is the key concept highlighted by the Children's Legal Centre. Their recommendation for all professionals to be highly trained regarding 'the nature of domestic violence, its effects on children, and the kinds of inter-relationships which can exist between domestic violence and the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children', is firmly endorsed. In addition, all professionals require extensive training in legal proceedings. A greater use of s.8 orders could assist older children with access to alternative accommodation to live away from an abusive environment. Social workers could assist children living in violent homes to take independent legal action to alter their residential status in order to protect themselves. Empowering children in this way would reduce the amount of social work intervention required in the long term for some of them.

The recent recommendations of the Law Commission need urgent implementation if the potential risk to witness-abused children is to be reduced. The Commission's proposal that emergency ouster orders should be used in the first instance to remove the alleged abuser from the home rather than the child requires swift enactment. Removing children from their homes and placing them in the care of the local authority could be avoided by the use of ouster orders. This would ensure that children are not victimised twice. The Children Act 1989 states that the welfare of the child is paramount. Any action which avoids children being taken into local authority care is in line with the main principles of the Act. Future legislation must ensure that this deplorable discriminatory practice is outlawed.

Multi-Agency Approach.

Although differences in specific philosophies will have to be addressed, local authority 'pluralism' could work to reduce the distress of witness-abused children. Fragmented ways of working offer nothing to women and children fleeing violence. All professionals involved with the protection of children need to work together in the best interests of the child. Social workers are normally considered the exemplars of good child protection practice. In conjunction with the refuge movement social workers will have to take the lead role in the re-training of the multi-

disciplinary team. Social workers possess the greater knowledge and skills required to alter this hitherto immutable situation, (Smith, 1990, Phal, 1985). Historically, formal networks have not applied their protection procedures in an uniform way. Children of abused women have not been perceived as 'deserving' cases for protection. In most circumstances women and children seeking statutory assistance are directed to women's refuges as a protective measure. Without follow up support this is an ineffective way to secure long term safety of children.

Firstly, social workers need to establish a good working rapport with their local housing departments, particularly if they are to advocate on behalf of a black woman and her children. British law operates to exclude ethnic minorities from gaining access to resources. Many black and ethnic minority womens' difficulties are compounded further because their residential status is called into question. Gaining alternative accommodation for all groups of women and children will prove difficult because of the 'shrinking' resources. All social workers will need to liaise with other agencies regarding the issues of racism, and perhaps remind agency representatives of their equal opportunities policies.

Kelly, (1992) highlights the importance of issues associated with domestic violence being included in the core-curriculum of

all educational establishments. Training for all professionals in this area of social life is necessary as it will provide them with a basic understanding of its predominance, causes and effects of its main victims, women and children. In mainstream schools the issue of domestic violence could be discussed in the personal/social skills classes, (Kelly, 1992). This would provide students with the opportunity to discuss the many explanations regarding family relationships that result in marital and child abuse. Social workers could greatly assist teaching staff in this area of social life. They could bring new ideas into the classroom and assist young people to develop healthy ways of dealing with relationships. Health visitors could also contribute to the core-curriculum by instructing young people in matters pertaining to child care. The health professionals are normally the first point of contact for abused women and their children if informal help is not available. Health professionals are a vital resource for children of abused women. Providing they understand the issues circumscribing domestic violence their quick responses in times of crisis could be vitally important to the protection of children, (Victim Support, 1990).

An example of good practice regarding child abuse and domestic violence is provided by the West Yorkshire police. The West Yorkshire police have developed a computerised list linking cases

of child abuse and domestic violence. Additionally, they are further able to locate witness-abused children on the child protection register to which the police have made a home visit. The police also keep a record of valid injunctions granted for domestic violence on their premises. The Children's Legal Centre believe that the West Yorkshire police model should be adopted nationwide. Stronger links are being developed between social workers and the police. It is now common practice in most area teams to consult with the police if a referral alleging child abuse is received into the social services department.

One of the most important links requiring urgent development is the one between the refuge movement and all other agencies, particular social work departments. There is a great necessity to dispel the "Happy Family Myth", (Wordaski, 1987). The work that is undertaken by refuge workers is vital to the survival of abused women and their children. Social workers require mothers to protect their children from all forms of abuse. To ensure that mothers are psychologically healthy enough to carry out this vital task they will also require protection. Current social work practice is ineffective at assisting children from violent homes in the most suitable way. This is because social workers are working in a 'blinkered' manner.

Conclusion.

There is a 'blueprint' available to assist social workers work more effectively with children of abused women, the Children Act 1989. Social workers using the Act more effectively could mitigate the distress for children fleeing violence. The refuge system works to empower the victims of domestic violence. Social workers should follow their example and work alongside the refuge activists to secure services for children of abused women. The work being undertaken with children in refuges should be fully supported and funded by the statutory agencies. The refuge system is currently being stretched to its financial limits, (Smith, 1990) It is vitally important that their work with children is acknowledged and extended. Strong links with health professionals to undertake follow up work with these children is essential. Children who do not remain in the refuge system for long periods of time or are unable to maintain contact with the children's worker following their departure need referring on for specialist help. Social workers could be instrumental in this process. They have access to the services which could assist children of battered women. The network of services accessible to social workers would be able to accommodate the child's specific cultural, race, religious and gender needs. There should never be a time when individual needs have to be sacrificed in exchange for safety. Children with disabilities

who live in rural settings are placed at an extra disadvantage. Intra-agency team work whereby social workers nationwide could link up to provide services to the most disadvantaged groups of witness-abused children could be established. Help lines should be provided for isolated children who fear for their own and their carers lives.

Shrinking resources since the 1970's have created a gap between 'deserving and undeserving' groups of people. Children of battered women fall into the undeserving group of individuals when it comes to providing services. It is the voluntary sector which has provided the majority of the services for women and children fleeing violence. Although the majority of these voluntary groups receive local authority funding to support their projects, the sum of money is so small charitable funds are a necessary source of finance to keep these projects operational. Women and children fleeing violent homes are still classed as low priority unless the child is being physically abused also.

The Children Act has imposed a duty on social workers to protect and promote the safety and well-being of all children in their area. The challenge for social workers is clear. They need to learn how to apply the Children Act more effectively. If services are not available to meet the needs of these children their requirements should not be denied or avoided by recording

them as 'unmet' quantities. Petty jealousy among professional contributors and the disparate nature of the multi-agency approach to this problem needs to be smoothed out if change is to occur. Social workers could be instrumental in bringing congruity to the multi-disciplinary team. More than a partial interest will be required from professionals if all forms of injuries to children are to be avoided. The scope of the problem is enormous. Domestic violence is one of the most underreported crimes committed, (Victim Support, 1993). This situation arises because the victims of this heinous crime believe that there is no effective help available. It is time that the dichotomous attitudes which exist within statutory agencies were abandoned.

CONCLUSION.

Public awareness regarding domestic violence was raised in the early 1970s by the Women's Movement. However, at this particular time the main focus of attention centred on the abuse of women by their male partners. The impact of witnessing parental violence on children was not recognised as a problem until several years later.

Concerns regarding the adverse effects on witness-abused children were initially raised by workers of the refuge movement. Their descriptive accounts of witness-abused children's distressing behaviour provided the impetus for further clinical and empirical research. Existing evidence indicates that children caught up in marital conflict encounter multiple social, psychological, emotional and behavioural difficulties. However, investigators have been unable to ascertain if the damage caused to children is unique to witnessing parental violence. Many other risk factors which could account for children's distress have been highlighted.

Numerous investigations have been undertaken to try and establish a correlation between spouse abuse and childhood exposure to parental violence. An attempts by some researchers to explain family violence from a systems theory perspective has also been tried. A cautious approach toward the findings is recommended.

Existing research only provides a partial explanation for the intergenerational transmission and systems theory of violence.

Children of battered women are innocent victims of their parents war and like other victims of war they need help to survive. To assist these children in their 'fight' against this oppressive society we must allow them to speak for themselves. Social workers could be instrumental in this process. Social workers will need to demonstrate a strong dedication toward assisting the non-abusing parent if children from violent homes are to receive appropriate protection. However, if the problem is to be resolved completely it will be necessary to obtain the complete acceptance of all agencies involved with protecting children that "working together" is the best way forward. A concerted effort by all agency representatives is required otherwise children of battered women will remain "victims of no consequence".

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